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ABSTRACT

The Moderation and Assessment Project, South West, was an outgrowth of the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative of the government of the United Kingdom that attempted to develop more courses with vocational relevance for adolescents. Growing from research projects under the Moderation and Assessment project, a new model of moderation is proposed. The new moderation, the reconciliation model of moderation, emphasizes that assessment/moderation is integral in the planning and teaching of courses and continuous with the process of delivery. Moderation by teachers in the context of a public examination allows for the monitoring and validation of teacher assessments of students. The proposed model emphasizes that moderation comes from and is responsible to both inside and external interests in the institution, and relies on a plurality of judgments. It is oriented to quality control, as it signals confidence and trust in teachers. Assessment and moderation are emphasized as serious management and staff training issues. Three figures illustrate the discussion. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)

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Moderation and Assessment Project - South West

A presentation of a model for moderating pupils' work that is teacher assessed, developed in England, UK.

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FOREWORD

The Moderation and Assessment Project, South West was funded by a UK government agency to support development in moderation practices of courses that contained a significant element of practical coursework. Such courses grew out of the expansion of the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative (TVEI) launched by the UK government in 1983.

One aspect of the TVEI was designed to increase the number of courses for 14-16 year olds that more directly related to the world of work e.g. information technology,business studies and design and technology. Since children in England and Wales sit a national examination ,the General Certificate of Secondary Education at the age of 16,it was considered important that these new courses received national accreditation through the examination boards.

The nature of the courses involved a high degree of practical and experiential learning. The evolving pedagogy of TVEI that considered process as important as product led to the questioning of pencil and paper terminal examinations as a valid form of assessment for these new courses. The examination boards responded by accepting the participation of teachers in the assessment of pupils' work for certification and by appointing moderators to monitor and maintain standards. Given their previous experience and general philosophy, the examination boards were not able to offer training other than of a procedural kind to the moderators,who, therefore had to discover and negotiate their new role themselves with the teachers.

Lack of a consensual approach led to concern about the varied and generally uneasy relationships between moderators and teachers. The TVEI co-ordinators in the South West Region of England decided to tackle the issue. The result was the setting up of the Moderation and Assessment Project- South West. The TVEI co-ordinators in the seven South West Authorities agreed to jointly fund one named person in each authority [to be designated as Assessment Development Officer (ADO)] to research and train together to develop moderation models and skills. Support in directing and evaluating the project was sought from the School of Education,University of Exeter. This resulted in Dr. Hilary Radnor directing the project and Dr. Ken Shaw evaluating it.

In summary,the MAP. SW project was a sustained attempt over a period of three years to identify,clarify, test in the field ,reflect upon and express coherently the evolving practice of assessment and moderation as it has been experienced and understood by the ADOs. The outcome of this work is the model of moderation presented in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

The literature on assessment is now enormously extensive. A useful survey by Murphy and Torrance (1988) of UK developments provides adequate background for the issues raised in this paper. Several strands are of special relevance to the MAP.SW project.

Firstly, pressure exists for increasing the integration of assessment more fully with teaching. A key document in this respect is the report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (1988) which opens with the contention that assessment of pupils' achievements "lies at the heart of promoting children's learning."(Para 3)

Secondly,the effect of the TVEI and the GCSE was to press schools continuously to endeavour to develop new skills,capacities and understandings in pupils,such as problem solving,gathering and analysing data,how to apply and use knowledge rather than remember it and how to exploit experiential learning opportunities. Assessing these learning objectives involves the design of relevant tasks in the form of projects and investigations ,for example, which enable pupils to show strengths other than those that can be shown in terminal examinations. For obvious reasons of cost amd logistics, teachers are in the best position to observe pupils at work over a period of time. Assessment of pupils' work in these conditions is not straightforward, and there is a demand that teachers' judgements be monitored and validated.

Thirdly,as Torrance stressed in a later article (1989), the issue of validity led examination boards to become interested in considering a broader sample of pupils' work than could be provided by the one-off,sit-down terminal test or examination. Only teachers could provide it,yet since the late 80s we have been in a period of distrust of teachers,of concern for accountability and interest in using the results of testing and examining as performance indicators for judging the success of schools.

Literature on moderation ,particularly studies drawing on detailed fieldwork carried out with schools and teachers, is very much harder to find. Schools Council Bulletin 37 (1977) stresses that "it is only since 1965 that teachers have begun to play a significant part in the assessment of their own pupils' work in the context of the public examination". Schools Council Bulletin No.37 saw teachers as capable of complementing the work of external examiners,offsetting the unreliability of the one-off examination. Moderation then served to establish standards amongst differing schools.

Alternatively,teachers could be sole assessors of what is inaccessible to the external examination: oral work,field work,practical music, drama,science or craft.

The experience of MAP.SW has been that these processes of moderation are problematic not only of a technical and logistic kind,but also, between moderators,teachers and examination board officials,of powersharing, of dignity, and professional self-respect,of "say" in decision making ,of skill and training, of the confidence teachers have in their own judgement,and of the lack of agreed and tested principles and working models ,as opposed to generalised,well intentioned official statements.

More recent published material dealing specifically with moderation is scanty. What is available (Bennetts :1986, Good and Cresswell :1988, Kempa:1986, SEC:1985, 1986,1988, SEAC: 1991) does not include a single study which draws upon detailed fieldwork with teachers and schools. The MAP.SW project was designed to draw from such fieldwork in order to develop an assessment and moderation package that was, as far as possible, straightforward, coherent and sensitive to the needs of both learners and teachers, linking notions of public credibility with teacher-based assessment and moderation practices.

The ADOs had two 'conferences' a year over 3 years. The group met for 2 days each conference from 10.00 am Day 1 to 4.00 pm Day 2, residing in hotels in the different counties.

The professional development model favoured by the tutor/director was to enable the ADOs to link the conferences together by engaging in research activities between the conferences. The purpose of this was to develop knowledge and understanding in the area of assessment/moderation. Evidence was collected in the field and ideas generated at the conferences. The ADOs also tested out their deliberations and analysis with colleagues in the ADO's own county. These research strategies re-inforced the shared collaborative activities that took place at the conferences themselves.

Each conference was structured so that, by the end of the conference each ADO had formulated an action plan of activities to undertake between conferences. These developed out of the end point of the conference itself. Each conference had a particular focus.

The first conference (September 1988) mapped out the future programme for the development officers. The focus of the project was to establish a teacher-moderation model in the schools/colleges with emphasis on the 14-19 age range. The focus was put as a research question; what does the project want from a teacher-moderation model for school/college based work?

The second conference (January 1989) was the first attended by all ADOs. At the conference three case studies were presented of teachers engaged in assessment and moderation of coursework. The main issues that emerged out of the case studies were noted and categorised into themes that formed the basis of areas of investigation and enquiry for the resultant first round ADO research projects that were set up.

The third conference (June 1989) generated a set of assessment and moderation principles based on the empirical evidence presented both by the projects and also by ADO's own wealth of experience.

The next stage from the formulation of the principles was to undertake empirical work to see if the principles could be grounded in practice. The ADOs agreed to devise projects to 'test out' principles and to feed that back to a later conference. In moderation terms the issues of ownership, responsibility and partnership were perceived as the key underlying concepts that had to be tackled; the relationship of the teachers to the board, the board to the public. The MAP SW principles seek partnership between examining agencies and teachers in teacher-assessed coursework. There is acceptance of the need for teachers to take responsibility for a rigorous self-regulating system that gives credibility to the idea of having ownership of assessment as well as of teaching processes.

The fourth conference (November 1989) came at the time when SATs (National Curriculum assessment) were being trialled and there was much debate about NVQs (vocational assessment). This conference was an up-dated 'teach-in' of national assessment practices concentrating on issues like criteria-referenced assessment and teachers' ability to assess with validity and reliability. The ADO's also negotiated a second round of projects that they were prepared to undertake.

Conference five (June 1990) centred around the findings of these individual projects. It is interesting to note that all the ADOs retained a belief in the principles as a foundation for good practice as strongly after the 'testing' as before. Some used them as a basis, ie taking the principle and seeing how the practice matched up to it. Where there were incongruities, they sought out why. They wanted to

know if the principles were workable in practice and whether the assessment or moderation arrangements already in operation were deficient in some way and could be improved by following MAP SW developments. Others were engaged in moderation and/or assessment activities and having been part of the process, then reflected on the principles to help them to evaluate the practices in which they were engaged. The overall outcome was clearly that the principles were perceived to be a sound basis from which to proceed and out of which it was possible to develop a moderation model. A number of issues emerged and the conference went a long way towards developing what was considered to be an appropriate model. The initial research question, what does the project want from a teacher-moderation model for school/college based work, was virtually answered.

The tutor/director took away the findings of the conference and together with all other evidence shaped the findings into the Reconciliation Model of Moderation that is presented here. The Reconciliation Model is introduced by listing a number of 'assertions'. The word assertions is used here to describe the positive statements of either belief/values/practices that underpin the model. The assertions have been arrived at through the individual research projects undertaken by the ADOs alongside collaborative discussions between the ADOs, the director and the evaluator of the project whose reports of each conference enabled the formative evaluation process to influence the final outcome.

Assertions

1. Teacher Assessment

As has already been stated, the focus of study in assessment/moderation was teacher assessment. Teacher assessment can be divided into formative and summative assessment and within these aspects of assessment there are differences. Leading up to our first assertion, it is necessary to describe these different types of assessment in order to focus on the conception of assessment that is linked to moderation.

Assessment here is divided into

Integrated formative assessment
Structured deliberate formative assessment
Snap-shot summative assessment
Formal structured summative assessment.

i) Integrated formative assessment

Teachers, in the act of teaching, are engaged in the process of assessing pupils' work. This process is essential in order to determine the development of the pupils' learning achievements. In this sense the teacher is constantly assessing and builds up a substantial knowledge base about each of his/her pupils. It could be said that the teacher is implicitly using skills of formative assessment, integrated in the teaching process. In other words, no specific assessment instruments are used to disrupt the teaching and learning flow but the teacher is forming judgments about the pupils' ability through observation and response to tasks set.

However there are occasions when assessment is made more explicit. This focusing on assessment appears to be abstracted out from the teaching context. This can happen in different ways for different purposes but can be categorised broadly in the following three ways.

(ii) Structured deliberate formative assessment

This form of assessment concentrates on helping the pupil during the process of learning. By its very nature, formative assessment is concerned

with supportive measures to help the pupil to identify his/her strengths and weaknesses in learning capabilities and thereby to improve pupils' learning abilities. The teacher and the pupils together, consciously and explicitly engage in assessment activities with the purpose of helping the child to achieve the learning tasks set. The key features of formative assessment are providing guidance to the child through a systematic feedback structure that encourages the pupil to take responsibility for his/her own learning, ie acquire the skills to plan his/her learning route to reach agreed objectives.

(iii) Snap-shot summative assessment.

At a point in time, the teacher may decide to give the pupil an assessment in order to sum up where the pupil has reached in a particular area and aspect of learning. This is really a reviewing process and is saying, 'It would appear that you know/understand and can do this because that is what the assess ment is telling me so now we can move on to the next stage. 'This assessment can take a number of forms. It could be a written test, a piece of written work marked to specific relevant criteria, an oral test or assignment, a demonstra tion of practical work or a conversational review between teacher and pupil that follows a particular format and looks at the pupil's achievements so far.

All these types of assessing so far described are very much part of the teaching and learning environment that the teachers and the pupils inhabit. Assessing 'checks out' how the pupil is learning (formative) or what the pupil has learnt (summative) against implicit and/or explicit criteria. Furthermore it often informs the pupil where he/she is in relation to the achievement of the other pupils in the class.

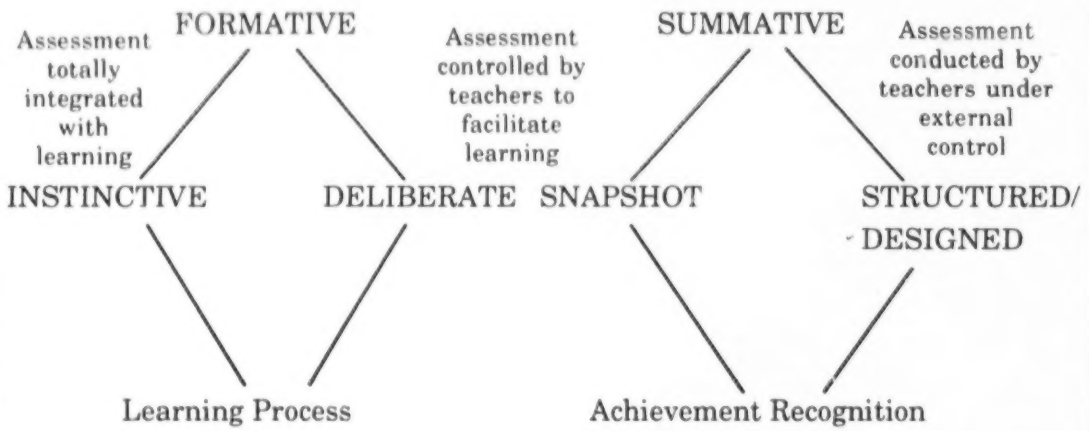
However assessment does go beyond the confines of the teacher-pupil relationship in the classroom. This category of assessment can be called:

(iv) Formal structured summative assessment

Formal structured summative assessment denotes the use of common assessment instruments that are used by a number of teachers to assess their pupils in different classrooms, in different schools in the same subject/ discipline. Although these pupils are taught by different teachers in different ways and in different contexts, this type of assessment is given to denote whether or not all the pupils subject to the assessment have learnt

whatthe assessment has been designed to reveal. The assessment could be constructed to show what pupils know/understand and/or do against specified criteria (criterion-referenced assessment) or designed to enable a comparison to be made between pupils in terms of their levels of ability in performing the assessment task (norm-referenced assessment). However more generally these days it is a mixture of both. It is when assessment reaches this formalised state that it is often seen as synonymous with testing and it is used by the education system to select out pupils of different abilities. These assessments differentiate and discriminate pupils as in the GCSE and will be the function of the SATS (Standard Assessment Tasks). It also provides certification for pupils which denotes the standard reached or in the case of the National Assessments at key stage 1-3, the attainment level achieved will be recorded. It is true to say that this form of assessment is only part of the assessment picture. It is also the case that all learning that takes place is not necessarily assessed or indeed assessable in a formal structured summative way. The assessment categories described can be diagrammatically presented as in Figure 1.

Figure 1 : Assessment Categories



Formal structured summative assessments rely on common assessment procedures and instruments that are used by a number of teachers to assess their pupils in different classrooms, in different schools in the same subject/ discipline. Because this commonality is built into the assessment design/ instrument these assessments can be moderated. It is because commonality is deliberately built into the assessment design, the procedures, criteria and documentation, are these assessments open to moderation.

2. M.A.P. SW take the view that systematic, structured, efficient, valid and reliable assessments are essential if the process of moderation is to be of value. Hence we assert that the quality of the moderation activity based on shared understanding is dependent therefore on the quality of the assessment activities. M.A.P. SW has developed assessment principles to aid and support quality assessing which in turn supports quality moderating processes. These are as follows:

Assessment Principles

(i) There must be a clear relationship between the aims of the course and the assessment objectives, of which all, including students are aware.

(ii) The assessment objectives can be achieved by the students within the scheme of work devised.

(iii) The assessment structure is sound and well designed, ie it fits the purpose for which it is devised.

(iv) In practice, the activities undertaken by the student are such that the assessment objectives can be met.

(v) Assessment processes should be based on clear and understandable criteria that are either context-related or, if general, context specific examples or interpretations are always provided.

(vi) What counts as evidence for assessment purposes is clearly delineated.

(vii) Evidence revealed by the students from different sources and in different modes is equally valued.

(viii) No assessment statement is recorded unless evidence for that statement is available and acceptable.

3. No matter how carefully thought out the assessment principles are, there is still the probability of different interpretations from different teachers in their own context. Hence the need for moderation which provides the opportunity to compare teachers' marking and grading one with another. It is through comparison of students' work which has been undertaken against agreed criteria that standards are decided and fixed upon. The interpretation of the teachers and moderator together determines the standards.
Therefore moderation is an activity of deliberation and interpretation of information out of which standards are socially constructed.

4. The key to good moderation practice is the nature of the activity of deliberating about and interpreting information. The significant contributors to the moderation process are (1) the teachers of the pupils being assessed and (2) an individual or individuals uninvolved with the pupils whose remit is to place a final value on the pupils' contributions. Research has shown that there normally exists a tension between the teachers responsible for coursework assessment and the moderators. This tension can be explained when the perspective that the teachers and the moderators have on the moderation process is taken into account.

5. Good moderation practice takes positive account of the multiple perspectives that exist within the moderation activity. The teacher perspective is called the 'insider', ie the teacher of the pupils being assessed at that point in time. The external assessed perspective is called the 'outsider', ie teachers and/or other individuals who have had no teaching contact with the pupils.

The 'insider' perspective

The final assessment of pupils' work by the teacher is the outcome of involvement in the teaching and learning process that both the teacher and the pupil have shared. The teacher's approach to the task is grounded in his/her knowledge of the pupil and overall awareness of the pupil's abilities. This knowledge has developed through the integral relationship between the teaching, learning and assessing both formative and summative that has been ongoing. The teacher is able to draw on evidence of process skills that form a part of the coursework assessment criteria. Process skills are not necessary explicitly obvious in the final product presented by the pupil for external assessment. The teacher's orientation is rooted in a holistic view of each of their pupils and his/her concern is towards a fair and equitable assessment of pupil achievement.

The 'outside' perspective

The external assessor approaches the business of assessing pupils' work with a very different perspective. As an outsider he/she is separate from the complexit ies of total immersion in the teaching/assessing process. The outsider orienta tion is towards placing a value on the attainment and achievement of pupils based on an itemised piece of evidence that has been capable of abstraction from the overall learning profile of the pupil. The outsider has a notion of standards of achievement possible for pupils in the particular knowldge area being as sessed. This standard is derived from deliberation of samples of pupils' work that are abstracted out of a variety of teaching environments. The holistic notion of the individual child is lost with the emphasis being placed on the product per se.

The insider is involved in a pupil process to product continuum with the individual pupil central to his/her concerns. The outsider is involved with a product-product continuum with comparability of pupils central to his/her concerns. In this sense each perspective could inform the other and the act of moderating could be seen as incorporating the positive aspects of these different perspectives to the benefit of the pupils being assessed.
Figure 2 tabulates the two perspectives.

Figure 2 : The 'Outsider' and 'Insider' Perspectives in Moderation

OUTSIDER	INSIDER
Detached from the reality of the context of teaching and learning	immersed in the complexities of the contextual reality
concerned with monitoring of aspects of knowledge that can be abstracted out of the (whole) coursework	involved in a (w)holistic way with knowledge acquisition in relation to particular children
has a collective universal notion of attainment and targets - fair and equitable for all pupils	is bound up in the realities of inter-acting with particular children - fair treatment for own cohort

6. The activity of moderation, therefore, is an attempt to reconcile these two different perspectives. The moderation process needs to recognise the outsider-insider dimension in the way it functions in practice. The insider

wants his/her own pupils dealt with fairly and the outsider wants to attribute a notion of objective standards of the pupils' attainments. The act of moderation in recognising these fundamental tensions and working at reconciling them. The quality of the moderation of pupils' assessments as well as the quality of experience for teachers engaged in the process would be enhanced if the process positively embraced the different perspectives as opposed to ignoring their existence.

The outsider's stance would be to respect and accept the insider's knowledge, trusting his/her professional judgments of previous stages of assessment that are not open to moderation. In other words, teacher as assessor is valued. The insider would need to be aware that relating individual work to a notion of generalisable standards is an acceptable part of the process. The outsider's knowledge in this area would act as a catalyst for the interpretations of the insider and enable the pupils' work to be seen in the wider educational context. Outsider information would be used to come to an evaluation of comparability across different teaching environments. In this model it is possible for the teacher to act as both an insider and an outsider at the same meeting. S/he is an 'insider' with regard to his/her own pupils and an 'outsider' with regard to other pupils' work.

Moderation conceived in this way is a supportive system that enables the development of teachers' professionalism in assessment of their pupils' work. The teachers act as equal partners with each other and any outside moderator who may be present. They are able to justify their stances one with another to reach agreement.

7. Moderation is directly concerned with the quality of the teachers' assessment activities and the teachers' awareness of general standards. Samples of pupils' work are used to achieve this. These samples represent differing levels of quality and cover written/oral/practical work.

8. Moderation as reconciliation embodies an accountability model that perceives accountability as a two-way process: the more 'objective' assessment establishment, i.e. the moderators' officialdom, working in association with the more 'subjective' teacher community to provide a national assessment out come that reflects actual practice. The model is grounded in reality - grounded in on-going dynamic and developing classroom practice.
As shown in Figure 3.

CONCLUSION

The "new " moderation, the reconciliation model of moderation proposed by MAP.SW stresses that assessment/moderation is integral with the planning and teaching of courses and continuous with the process of delivery;

- comes from and is responsible to both outside and inside interests in the institution,
- relies on a plurality of judgements brought into agreement by negotiation;
- promotes communication, transfer of information and thus staff develop ment;
- is orientated to quality control and a developmental accountability in part nership.
- signals confidence and trust in teachers;
- and stresses assessment and moderation as a serious management and staff training matter for the school.

At the heart of the new model is the realisation that moderation depends on the achievement, by discussion and negotiation within a group of a socially constructed consensus, about how work is to be valued and criteria interpreted.

Our experience over the last three years of MAP.SW suggests that many teachers need to update and hone their assessment skills, and even more need to be helped to reflect on moderation procedures and their part in them.
Unless training takes place we believe moderation is likely to revert to an external model which would mean that teachers will be de-skilled and the opportunity lost for professional development. In the end delivery of the curriculum will suffer if assessment and moderation is not going to take place in a partnership.

MAP.SW. grew from a discontent with the limitations of the older assessment / moderation models. We hope, that in presenting a model which searches for consensus through reconciliation of viewpoints within an atmosphere of mutual professional respect, teachers, together, with others in the educational world, will work towards quality moderation practices to effectively benefit the majority of pupils. For teachers this moderation model holds out the prospect of professional development and eventual accreditation of networks and teachers. This is a model worth disseminating.

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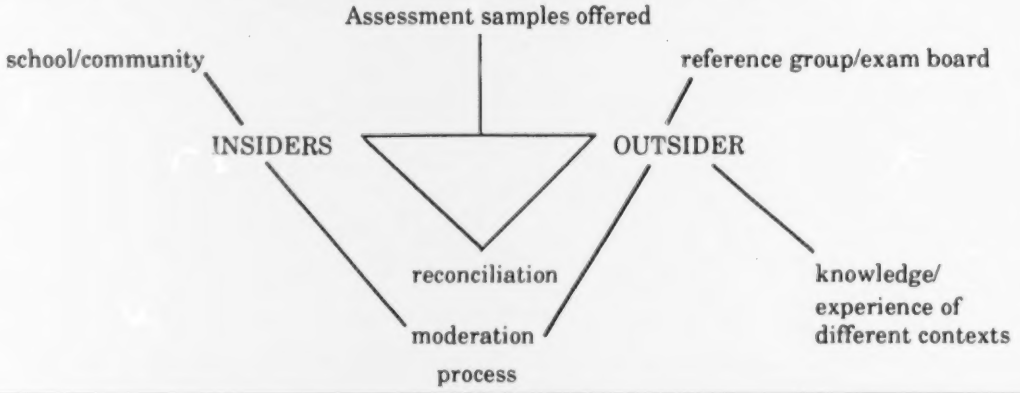
M.A.P. SW Project

Figure 3 THE RECONCILIATION MODEL OF MODERATION



The strength of the reconciliation model is that, in seeing moderation as integral to the professional capacity and skills of the practising teacher, the process can take place between classroom teachers, and in schools as well as at consortia and county level. This is because of the recognition of the different perspectives in the process itself. Therefore the 'outsider' could be internal to the school because the 'outsider' is any qualified professional who is not directly involved in the initial teaching/assessing of the group of pupils whose work is put forward for teacher assessed coursework moderation.

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